

TIME

MAY 8, 1964



WENNERSTROM ON WAY TO COURT
Flushed out by a cleaning woman.

SWEDEN

The Case of the Red Eagle

Though neutral Sweden has not fought a war for 150 years,* few Western nations are better prepared for one. The crack Royal Swedish Air Force, with 1,000 first-line jet aircraft, is the world's fourth biggest (after the U.S., Russia, Britain). To defend itself against Soviet attack, Sweden has spent hundreds of millions of dollars since 1935 building a vast secret complex of command posts, antiaircraft missiles, submarine pens and support facilities buried deep in its granite mountains.

And all the time, at the apex of its military establishment, systematically selling the latest details of its defense strategy, sat a respected Swedish officer

* Since French General Jean Bernadotte, later crowned Sweden's King Charles XIV, allied his country with Britain, Austria, Prussia and Russia in the campaign that finally defeated Napoleon in 1814.

with the secret rank of Soviet major general.

Unquestioned Access. The Red army's favorite Swede was Colonel Stig Wennerstrom, 57, the suavely handsome aviator and longtime (1952-57) air attaché in Washington who was arrested last June after passing Swedish, U.S. and NATO secrets to Russia for 15 years. Though Wennerstrom is still on trial behind locked doors in the Stockholm courthouse, he has told enough of his activities to spur a massive, forced-draft revision of Sweden's defense program that will cost at least \$57 million over the next seven years. Last week a bulky report on his case published by a bipartisan parliamentary investigating commission suggested that the political cost to the government—which faces elections in September—will also come high. "The Eagle," as he was code-named by the Russians, had been under grave suspicion for years, but so relaxed—or just plain lax—was the Swedish government that nothing decisive was done about it.

As far back as 1946, Inspector Otto Danielsson of the state security police investigated Wennerstrom. Finding an exhaustive report on Soviet intelligence by Wennerstrom, who had spent six wartime months in Moscow, Danielsson concluded that it could only have been prepared by someone who was actually in league with the Russians. But there was no conclusive proof against Wennerstrom, and around 1958 he became consultant on rocketry to Defense Minister Sven Andersson. As such, the Eagle had unquestioned access to the most highly classified material, which almost certainly included defense information that the U.S. has provided Sweden.

No Whistle. Defense Minister Andersson was informed of police suspicions in late 1959 and again in January 1960. When the then Foreign Minister Osten Unden asked the Defense Ministry for a military expert to advise him on disarmament questions, Andersson recommended Wennerstrom—in the belief that this would be a safe place for him. Hardly. Though Foreign Minister Unden was also informed of the suspicions that had been aroused by Wennerstrom, the colonel continued to request and get top-secret defense and

STATINTL

foreign office files. Even when Justice Minister Herman Kling finally decided in 1962 to brief Premier Tage Erlander, two scheduled meetings with him were canceled for trivial reasons. Inexplicably, officials made no further attempt to blow the whistle.

But the police continued to dig for solid evidence and finally got their man with the help of Mrs. Caren Rosen, a middle-aged cleaning woman who worked at Wennerstrom's stylish mansion in suburban Djursholm. She secured papers that proved "of great value to the investigation," and the police grabbed the Eagle as he was about to fly off to Spain. Wennerstrom had proved so valuable a spy that he was secretly offered Soviet citizenship as well

as his major-generalcy, was awarded "several medals" and allowed to accumulate \$100,000 in "back pay" in Moscow, in addition to cash handouts of \$750-\$1,000 per month.